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SAVANNAH POSTPONES HER ASCENSION

-BY---

EMMA PETTY



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Eldridge Entertainment House

Franklin, Ohio

and

Denver, Colo.
944 So. Logan Street

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Eldridge Entertainment House

FRANKLIN, OHIO

also

DENVER, COLO. 944 S. Logan St.

Savannah Postpones Her Ascension

By EMMA PETTY

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DEC 19 1921

ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE, Franklin, Ohio, also Denver, Colo.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

4

Savannah—the most unexcitable colored person in the settlement.

Joe Brown-Savannah's husband.

Pastor Scott—the preacher.

Julia—the preacher's wife.

Susie

Liza

011:

Leading members of the colored congregation

Harriet

Max-Harriet's husband

Elviry Ann—Liza's 12-year-old sick daughter.

Elviry Ann is long, lank and mournful. Her faded gingham dress has drawn up until it scarcely covers her knees. She is habitually tragic.

Chorus of unseen spectators.

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Savannah Postpones Her Ascension

SCENE I.

(It is early in June and the scene opens in the back yards of Susie and Liza. A rickety fence divides the back yards. Liza is hard at work washing as the curtain goes up, but Susie is just appearing.)

Susie—Mighty fine sermon Brother Scott preach las' night.

Liza—(between clothespins) Uh!

Susie—Looks like Elviry Ann's goin' ter keep on chillin' all th'r' the meetin', so as yer'll never git t' go.

Liza—It sure do seem hard. 'Tain't as if I wuz lak Savanny Brown what never has any stirrin' of the sperrit. Her a-settin' there at meetin' cold an' stone-like, an' me at hum attendin' to Elviry an' a-longin' to be where all them visions an' overflowin's is a pourin' down from the Lawd. Guess Savanny's man, Joe, ain't never dared to shout yit?

Susie—Lawd, yis! Las' night I seen him kinder squirmin' an' a-watchin' Savanny outer the corner of his eye, an' he ses, ses he, "Savanny, I'm a-goin' ovah to de men's cornah a while," an' Savanny she ses, scornful like, "Guess yer wantin' ter git back there so as ter shout thout me seein' yer. Guess I never seen you las' night when yer was a-poundin' Harriet Jones on the back, huh? Guess 'twasn't you was a groanin' an' goin' on back there when the pastor's wife tole about her vision! Vision, nothin! Sister Julie had a night mare—that's what she had, b'lieve me." Them's the very words Savanny said.

Liza—Aint it awful?

Susie—Yas, sir, an' when Joe had done gone, I leans ovah and punches Savanny, an' ses, ses I, "Sistuh Savanny, doesn't you ever feel the sperrit a-risin' up within yer—an' doesn't Almighty ever come along an' snatch away yer washtubs an' clotheslines an' chickens, an' everything earthly and show yer the wonderful sights er heaven?" "No," ses Savanny, "I don' see as he does—an' I don' see how in the name er all that's high an' holy, you folks gits them there visions." She spoke scornfullike, but I never tuk no notice an' I ses, "Well, hit's jes' this er-way—you thinks er somethin' you has hear tole about in the Bible—then you shets you eyes an' lets yer head go this er-way—an' then—an' then the vision comes, Savanny. I'se sorry if de Lawd don' sen' you none.

Liza—Sen' Savanny Brown a vision? Well, I guess not!—an' her so plum hard-headed that she'd look the other way after Almighty gon' an' bin to the trouble to git it ready for her. I guess not! Well, if there ain't Harriet Jones, and Max comin' from meetin' a'ready—an' they is comin' in here.

Susie—Somethin's happened at meetin'. You jes' mark my word.

Harriet Jones.—Fer ther Lawd's sake—washin' away on ther las' mornin' of ther meetin'—an' missin' all ther wonderful manerfestations er ther Lawd. Jes' yisterday Miss Mary she ses to me, "I jes' mus' have them clean clothes tomorrer," an' I ses, "No, Miss Mary, the Lawd he done spuk fer tomorrer fust." Lawsie, think what I'd er missed if I'd er stayed ter home an' washed!

Susis—(leaving her tub) Whut happen, Harriet Jones? Go back in that there house, Elviry Ann, and git under dem blankets. What happen, Harriet?

Max—(eagerly) That's what we come ter tell yer.

Harriet—Well, 'twuz dis way: der preacher he bin a-preachin' an' a-prayin', an' ther folks a groanin' an' a swayin' an' Sistuh Julyer she gits up an' tells her vision,

an' Max he tells his'n, an' Mary Wood she tells hers, an' den Ollie, an' den Joe Brown he git up lookin' scared like at Savanny, an' he tells his'n—

Liza—(excitedly) Whut did Savanny say—Wuz she plumb mad?

Harriet—Jes' a minit, an' I'll git to that part. Yas, sir, she set dere mum as a lam' an lookin' queerer an' queerer ever' minit—an' den—de Lawd strike me dead, if I ain't tellin' the truth. (Gazes with rapt look into space)

Susie—Hurry, Harriet, we is jes' dyin' to know the res'.

Max—(rubbing his hands together) We is comin' to hit, Susie.

Harriet—Well, when Joe sits down, I looks over to see how Savanny's a-takin' it, an' bless my soul, there she sat a-swayin' this a-way an' that, an' mutterin' something to herself, an' then while everbuddy was groanin' an' sayin' "Amen," up hops Savanny, if ever I tole the truth—(Pauses, shakes her head, mops her brow.)

Small voice behind the washiub—Please, Sistuh Harriet, please 'um, go on!

Liza—Elviry Ann, you go right back to that house an' git under them blankits—you isn't through chillin' yit. We is listenin', Harriet.

Max—We is comin' to ther stirrin' part, Liza.

Harriet—As shore as I'm standin' here, up jumps Savanny Brown a-sayin "Brethrin', the Lawd hev sen' me a vision!"

Susie—Goodness, sakes alive!

Liza—De col'-hearted critter whut nevah have shouted in her life—her hev a vision—well, I never!

Susie-But you hasn't tole us the vision.

Harriet—As I was a-sayin', everthing wus deathlike still, then Savanny she begun like dis: "As I sits here, why suddenly the worl' an' the house, an' all, hit fades away, an' I sees a woman in a white dress risin' from de yerth, an' a flyin' straight up to de sky, an' I ses, 'Who

am dat woman?' An' a voice say, 'Dat woman am Savanny Brown.'" Then she sets down, an' Joe he looks plumb wild-like an' de pastah calls out excited-like, "When, Sistuh Savanny, when does yer fly from the earth? Jes' close yer eyes a minute an' see if yer don't see a date a hangin' in ther air?" Then Savanny she looks straight up at ther black board behind the pastor, an shets her eyes an' ses, "At three o'clock on the thu'teenth of June."

Susie—At three o'clock on the thuteenth of June! Why thet's when ther Sunday School Convention begins, an' she done promise ter keep care of them four diligits a whole week.

Harriet—(loftily) Well, if de Lawd say fo' Savanny ter fly I guess she'll have to go when he says, won't she? Guess it ain't fer her ter be parleyin' wid Almighty, about de date of her flyin'.

Liza-Will we never see her no more?

Harriet—(wisely) Yer never heard tell er anybuddy seein' Ligah nor Moses, agin, did yer?

Max—Isn't we goin' ter tell about my vision, Harriet?

Harriet—No, we isn't, Max Jones—you done had dat same vision ever' year for twenty years! Come long hit's time to go. There goes Savanny an' Joe, now(motioning to an unseen lane, further on. Elviry slides by on her hands and knees while Harriet is speaking.)

Voices in the distance—

First Voice—There she goes! There goes ther woman whut's goin' ter fly ter heavin.

Second Voice—Whoopee! I'm glad hit's her stid er me!

Third Voice—Jim an' me's goin' ter sit on ther gate posts when de flyin' comes off.

Fourth Voice—No, you isn't, me an' my brother, Sam, is goin' ter set on 'em.

Small tearful voice—Please lemme by, Sam, lemme go. I jes' got ter ask Savanny somethin'.

Liza—(as the group of on-stage speakers start in alarm in the direction of the voice) Somebuddy's mistreatin' Elviry Ann—how'd she git by us?

Elviry Ann—(off stage—wailing) Oh, ma, lemme go jes' a minute, I jes' got ter ask Savanny somethin'.

Liza—Elviry Ann Heminway, you go right home an' git under dem there blankets.

CURTAIN

SCENE II.

(The curtain rises showing a large kitchen and dining room combined; the stove is behind a screen and is not seen. Savannah is stirring batter in grim silence. Joe is trying to read his Bible while he watches Savannah out of the corner of his eye. Every few minutes Savannah seems to swell with some inward emotion. Several days have passed since the morning of the vision; its glory is gone, leaving Savannah strangely depressed—filled with forebodings.)

(A few seconds of silence.)

Savannah—(snappishly) Well, Joe Brown, why isn't you readin' you' Bible?

Joe—(meekly) Dat's whut I is a-doin', Savanny.

Savannah—No, you isn't. I seen you a-countin' de pinches ob soda I put in dis yere batter.

Joe—(hesitatingly) Well, Savanny, you see hit's like dis: if you goes flyin' off an' I has to git my own meals. I—

Savannah—Joe Brown, I tole you not to say nothin' more about dat dere flyin'.

Joe-Seems lak I caint think of nothin' else.

Savannah—Den don't think o' nothin'—'twon't be much loss. (Another pause. Savannah's inward commotion seems steadily rising. She handles each article that she touches as though it were a gaping spectator at the scene of her flying and mentally wrings its neck.)

(A knock at the door.)

Joe-Come right in, Ollie.

Ollie--I've come, bringin' you some chicken pie, bein' as it's yours and Savanny's las' Sunday together.

Savannah—(shortly, turning her back) Put hit on de table, Ollie, an' thank yo'.

Joe-(conciliatingly) Hit's awful nice, Savanny.

Savannah—Jes' leave hit on de table, wheah you foun' hit.

(Pause)

Ollie—(trying to break the uncomfortable silence) Guess I'll have to bring Joe ovah somethin' ever now an' den when you is gone, Savanny.

Savannah—(still with back turned) When you goes, Ollie Smith, be sure to shet that screen door hard. De flies is awful bad dis summah.

Ollie—Yas'm. (Exit.)

Joe—'Pears lak you is awful cross 'bout de subjick of your flyin', Savanny.

(Silence. Savannah stirs vigorously.)

(The door opens and Elviry Ann, long, lanky and tragic, slides in.)

Savannah—(severely) Elviry Ann, whut yuh doin' outa bed an' yo' ma stayin' home from meetin' count o' yo' chillin'?

Elviry Ann—(beginning to cry) I done had one fo' today—hones' I has. Dey comes on twixt ten and three an' now hit's mos' six. (Dries her eyes and rubs imploringly against Savannah, looking for all the world like a half-starved kitten.)

Elviry Ann—Savanny, when you flies, you isn't a goin' to wear yo' red Sunday hat, is you?

Savannah-Now, Elviry Ann, don' you git sassy.

Elviry A.—(beginning to cry again) Well, ma, she says as how you is goin' to wear a wreath o' roses stid of a hat.

Savannah—An' what if I does?

Elviry A.—Well, if you flies off an' leaves that red hat behin' please caint I have it?—please—please?

Savannah—(grim!y taking Elviry A. by the shoulders) Elviry Ann Heminway, when I flies off an' leaves dat red hat, you kin have it—min' you—when I flies off an' leaves hit. (Elviry A. is pushed out of the kitchen door.)

Joe-Well, if heah don' come de pastor an' his wife.

Savannah—(muttering) More meddlin' niggahs! Let 'em in yo'self if you wants 'em. (They are admitted. Joe is effusive to make up for Savannah's chilly welcome.)

Pastor—I wus jes' sayin' dat I saw Elviry Ann skinnin' de back fence, an' she looked happy fo' de fust time since she was borned.

Savannah—(aside) An' nuthin' to be happy about, neither.

Julia—Whut you say Savanny? Savannah—(shortly) Nuthin! (Pause.)

Pastor—(clearing his throat) You see, Savanny, we thought today would be a good time to decide where you wus to fly frum, an' Julie, she ses to me, as we cum up, "Dat dere stump by de souf window, dat's de very place to fly frum—what about hit, Sistuh Savanny?

Savannah-Suits you, suits me, I reckin.

Julia—An' Max he's a-comin' over at sun-up wid 'is stick to keep de niggahs frum crowdin' in de front yard

an' not leavin' you room to git started. Dey is comin' fer miles aroun' (Silence.) an' Ollie, she tuk two of you' diligits an' Harriet she tuk de other two.

Savannah—(startled into animation) Tuk my diligits—how come?

Pastor—Why, Savanny, if you goes flyin' off de fust day of de convention, why Joe, he caint cut wood an' go to meetin' an' cook fo' diligits too, can he?

(Silence.)

Savannah—Joe, you might be a-takin' de pasto' an' Julie out to look at dat tree stump, bein' as dat's whut dey come for, an'—

Julia—We done look at hit as we come up, Savanny.

Savannah—An' bein' as hit's gettin' late an' you' supper not done, an' you a-wantin' to git to sleep early, an' de pasto' an' Julie wantin' to git along befo' meetin' time—(Exeunt Joe, Pastor and Julia.) Come in at de kitchen door when you gits through, Joe—supper'll be waitin'.

Savannah—(banging the salt cellar down on the table) Flyin'—flyin'—flyin'—nobuddy caint talk 'bout nuthin' but de flyin'. (Lifts a chair and bangs it on the floor out of her way.) Takin' my diligits, an' me de bes' cook in de congregashun! (Breaking down.) An' I caint fly, nohow. Leas'wise no higher'n' Joe's ole blue hen. O Lowd, I isn't even sure now dat I seen dat date a-hangin' in de air; seems lak it jes' come a tricklin' into my head frum somewheres. I doesn't know where. Whut shall I do? I caint fly a tall! I done tride hit dis mawnin' off de end of de kitchen table. (Rocking back and forth.) O Lawsy, help me in de time of my affliction.

CURTAIN

SCENE III.

(Exterior of a house, suggested by two windows, which can be $mad\epsilon$ of paper and pinned to the back curtain. There is no fence visible and a large tree stump stands near one window. Max is on sentry duty and waves stick repeatedly toward some intruders, just out of sight. The tree stump is swathed in white and Susie is decorating it with flowers and greens.)

Chorus—Quit pushin'! Look out dere! I got heah fust!

Max-Git offen dat fence—'tain't time fo' de flyin' yit!

(Enter Ollie)

Ollie—I foun' a wire at las'; now I kin make dat wreath. (Begins to make a wreath of leaves and white roses.)

Susie—(with her mouth full of pins) Now how does 'at look?

Ollie and Harriet—(who has just entered, rolling her youngest in a baby buggy.) Fine, Susie!

Susie—Jes' roll de baby in de shade, Harriet, an' come help wid dis here flyin' stump. Right 'roun' dere hit needs some mo' roses. Liza, she couldn' come help, lak she promise', cause Elviry Ann, she's a-chillin' agin. Lan's sake, dere's Liza, now.

Liza—(apologetically) I jes' tuk Elviry Ann, in wid a extra blankit. an' lef' her fo' a little while. Hit's mos' time for Savanny to fly, ain't it? Whut's she got all her windows down fo' on a hot day like dis?

Susie—Sh-h-h! Savanny's been actin' mighty queer-like today. Folks say she started off down de road dis mawnin' 'fo' it was light, but sakes alive, the niggahs had already begun to gather roun' de back fence to be shore to git a good place to see de flyin', an' dey jes' follered her, spite of all her growlin'; so she gits an' comes

home, an' shets de doors an' winders, an' de pastah an' his wife lak to nevah got in. 'Pears lak Savanny she ain't wantin' to fly.

Max—Who's back dere 'hind dem bushes?

Liza—Well, it do beat all! Elviry Ann, you git right back home an' git under dem blankits. Ain't you 'shamed, an' you not through chillin' yit? (Exit Elviry Ann, sniffling.)

(Sounds from the house. Savannah's voice is heard through the window.)

Savannah—(sulkily) I isn't shore dis is de day, nohow. De Lawd he isn't sed nuthin' mo' 'bout it.

Pastor—(sternly) Almighty, he don' command but onct.

Voices from the fence—(speakers unseen)

First Voice—Dere ain't room fo' no mo', on dis here side.

Second Voice—Jes' look how hit's a-bendin' over.

Third Voice—Lan' sake, dere's a hund'ed mo' comin'.

Fourth Voice-Down de road.

Fifth Voice—I neval see so many folks in my life. (General murmuring.)

Julia—(from within) Whah's yo' ascinshun robe, Savanny?

Savannah—(sulkily) Ain't got none.

Julia—Den I'll jes' run over to de church an' git one o' dem new white baptismal robes. (Silence within the house again.)

Susie—Hit's a pity for dat new baptismal robe to go up. I worked three hours makin' one.

Ollie—(soothingly) Well hit's de las' one Savanny'll need.

Liza-Hit's two minutes to three.

Susie—Sh-h-h! (A moment of waiting.)

Liza—(in a whisper) Dey is comin'.

Pastor—to Max) Don't let dem folks come no closer, Savanny may need some room to git started.

Max—(waving stick) Dontcha climb dat fence.

(Enter Savannah, looking worn and rebellious, clad in the ascension robe. On one side is Joe, wild-eyed with terror; on the other side is the pastor, proud and exalted; behind comes the pastor's wife, bearing Ollie's wreath. They solemnly approach the flying post. Max, Ollie, Liza, Susie and Harriet wait breathlessly.)

Pastor—Kneel, Sistuh Savanny! (Savannah kneels and receives the wreath.)

Pastor—(portentiously) Rise, Sistuh Savanny, rise!

(Savannah rises and with the help of several is hoisted to the stump.)

Pastor—Fly, Sistuh Savanny, fly—an' Almighty hol' up yo' wings. (He raises his hands in exaltation, and the others do likewise, save Joe, who wrings his. Savannah gives one flap. Spectators groan. Another flap. A louder groan. Then Savannah shuts her eyes and seems about to spring. Joe sinks to his knees and covers his eyes.)

Spectators—(as one great chorus) Fa'well, Sistuh Savanny! Fa'well! Fa'well!

Pastor—Shet yo' eyes bretherin lestwise de Lawd look down when he part de heavins, an' His face blind you.

(Savannah gives one wild flap and a desperate spring and soars only to descend, and the ascension robe catching on the stump, draws back leaving Savannah sliding to the ground. The robe pulls back to her knees, and the remaining distance to her feet is filled out by red-striped stockings. She is dazed and stares glassily at the tees of her shoes.)

Spectators—(regaining their breath, their eyes still shut, their hands still extended toward the parting heavens.) Fa'well, Sistuh Savanny, fa'well—fa'well!

(About the time Savannah gives her spring, Elviry Ann's head appears at the window, from within the house, her eyes shut tight; she smiles rapturously and on her head rocks the coveted red hat. She rubs her hands together in an intoxication of joy. As the last farewell dies away, she opens her eyes toward heaven, and as they travel down to earth she discovers Savannah seated at the foot of the stump.)

Elviry Ann—(wailing and wringing her hands as she sways back and forth) Oh, me! Oh-h-h, me! She ain't a-goin' a tall! She's jes' a-settin' dere on de groun' by dat ol' stump. She ain't a-goin' a tall. Boo hoo, hoo!

(The spectators lower their hands, open their eyes and stare down at Savannah who still looks at her toes with unseeing eyes.)

Elviry Ann-Boo-hoo-hooooo!

(Savannah rises slowly, ominously, on her all-fours; all the pent-up wrath of weeks surges up in one big wave, she pulls herself up while the crowd looks on fascinated.)

Savannah—(to Elviry Ann) You long, lanky weasel of a sick niggah; you go put my bonnit back in de box where you foun' hit! I ses to you: "You kin have my red hat when I flies off an' leaves hit; when I flies off," an' I ain't gone yit.

Chorus on fence—Law no! Hee-hee! (Giggles grow louder.)

Pastor—(raising his hand) Silence, bretherin! Sistuh Savannah, whut do dis mean?

Savannah—(furiously) Whut do hit mean? (shaking her fist.) Whut do hit mean? It means de Lawd he nevah say I got to fly up fo' keeps, de fust time. He say, "Fly, Savanny," an' ain't I done flew? An' if I isn't flew high 'nuff to suit you, you take yo' robe an' fly you own self. (She snatches off the robe, leaving a plain gingham dress beneath. Tosses wreath to Julia.) An' you kin take that an' go 'long wid 'im. Dere's yo' stump a-

waitin'. De time when I flies up fo' keeps am indefinitely postpone! (Moves majestically to the house and Elviry Ann, with a loud shriek, rushes out.)

Liza—Come 'long wid me, Elviry Ann—worryin' yo' pore ol' mother into her grave.

Elviry Ann—She ain't a-goin' to fly a tall—boo-hoo-hoo-hoo! I'll have to wear Pa's ol' straw hat de res' o' my days.

(The crowd begins to go out in stately silence. Harriet and Ollie go over and snatch their linen from the stump. Execut all except Joe, who still stands looking at the spot where Savannah lately sat. He rubs his hands perplexedly, as the others file out. Then he smiles hopefully and goes to the window and peers in.)

Joe-(in loud whisper) Savanny! (No answer.)

Joe—(louder) Savanny!

Savanny—(crossly) What?

Joe—Savanny, you git suppah after while an' I'll jes' step over an' fetch dem dere diligits over. (No answer.)

Joe—An' 'spose I tells Elviry Ann to run in tomorrow an' git dat red hat, 'cause yo' done wore it five yeahs an' l is saved up de money to buy dat putty one in de shop window what you wanted all summah.

Savannah—(milder) Huh!

Joe—(more conciliating than ever) An' Savanny, de fust thing, I'm goin' to put on my ever-day britches an' go down to de fiel' an' git us dat big watermillin.

Savannah—All right, honey, hurry up! I hasn't et nuthin' today.

CURTAIN

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By Margaret Howard. A pretty story showing how dissatisfied Betty was cured by her mother, who tells the story of the hardships of the Pilgrims, which is illustrated by ten tableaux. Large numbers of children can be used. Plays about 30 minutes. Price, 25c

Princess Rosy Cheeks

By Effie Sammond Balph. A "good health" play for children, which is very impressive. Introduces Fresh Air Fairies, Soap and Water Fairies, Tooth Brush Brigade, Food Fairies, Rest Fairies, and others. Goodsized cast required with two older children. Plays about 1 hour. Price, 35c.

Oueen Loving Heart

By Jean Ross. A splendid children's play, teaching many good lessons. A pretty story of the crowning of Loving Heart, her capture by the Indians and subsequent release, because of her kindness. Can be used for May Day play. 11 speaking parts, Indians, etc. Plays about 45 minutes. Price, 25c.

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YOU WILL BE GLAD TO KNOW OF THESE NEW PLAYS

Training Mary

By Mary Shaw Page. A bright 1-act play with simple stage setting. William, husband of Mary, essays to train Mary, especially along the lines of correcting carelessness. As is always the case, William zets in deep water, but finally wades out. 2 males, 4 females, and plays about 45 minutes. Price, 25c.

The Hired Man's Courtship

By Alice Cripps. A short comedy-drama in 2 acts. Captain Edwards tires of wealth and the city, and procures work on Horton's farm, only to find that the farmer's daughter is an old sweetheart. Because of an intrigue on the part of the captain's cousin, an estrangement takes place, which ends happily when the captain finds the source of certain stories and refutes them. Aunt Hepsey, Jim and Ezra (colored), add comedy to the play. Plays about 45 minutes, and is for 3 males and 3 females. Price, 25c.

Merely Anne Marie

A comedy in 3 acts by Beulah King. 3 males, 5 females. Time, 2½ hours. The scenes are laid in a fashionable boarding house, and the characters are all distinct types and worth while. A successful playwright, desiring to escape notoriety, seeks seclusion at Mrs. Teague's and becomes the hero of Anne Marie, the dining room maid. The dialogue is bright, the situations clever and the story ends happily. 35c.

A Bit of Scandal

By Fannie Barnett Linsky. Comedy-drama in 2 acts. Francina, who is to play at the recital, composes her own number. On the evening of the recital, Mary Sherman, who precedes her on the program, plays Francina's compositions, which she has stolen. The reasons for the theft all come out later and of course, all ends well. Nine characters. Plays about 1 hour. Price, 35c.

Miss Burnett Puts One Over

By Ethelyn Sexton. A rollicking 1-act girls' play for 6 characters. Barbara's mother has a friend, Ann Burnett, who is to visit the girls at college, with the intention of giving a generous sum to the school. The girls, wishing o gain her good will, practice their "manners." Miss Burnett, however, appears in disguise and has much fun at their expense. All ends well and the school gets the money. Plays about 45 minutes. Easy setting and costumes. Price, 25c.

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